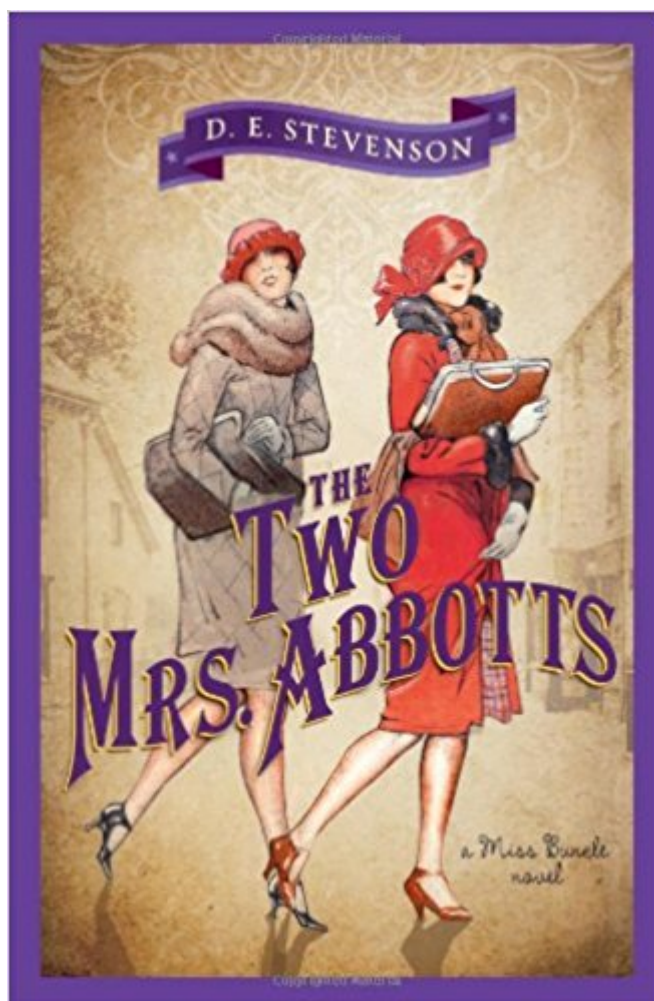


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The Two Mrs. Abbotts (Miss Buncle)



Synopsis

Nothing Goes Unnoticed in the Small Town of Wandlebury! Much as changed in Wandlebury since Barbara Buncle (now Barbara Abbott) first moved to the charming English village. But as the mistress of her own home with two small children to look after, Barbara finds that she has distressingly little time to keep up with the goings-on of her friends and neighbors. Luckily, Barbara's niece, Jerry Abbott, is more than willing to keep tabs on the news in Wandlebury. And with juicy tidbits of gossip about everything from inconvenient romantic entanglements to German spies hiding in the woods, there is plenty to keep the two Mrs. Abbotts busy in this humorous account of life in World War II England. D.E. Stevenson delivers another well-crafted gem with *The Two Mrs. Abbotts*, the third and final book of the beloved Miss Buncle series.

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Customer Reviews

D.E. Stevenson (1892-1973) had an enormously successful writing career; between 1923 and 1970, four million copies of her books were sold in Britain and three million in the United States.

Chapter One The Lady in the Drawing Room "Grrh, I'm a bear! Grrh, grrh, I'm a bear, Dorkie!" "Oh, dear, so you are! Wotever shalladoo!" "Grrh-I'm going to eat you up." Dorcas raised her eyes and saw, peering through the lacework of the wrought-iron banisters, the small eager face of her beloved. She thought-as she had often thought before-that Simon was the most beautiful thing in the world. His clear skin was pale gold, warmed by the sun; his hair, thick and straight and shiny,

was a deeper, richer gold, and his eyes beneath his arching golden eyebrows were true hazel. Dorcas was devoted to little Fay of course-she was the baby and babies are very close to one's heart-but Simon came first. If it would have saved Simon a moment's pain Dorcas would have lain down in the road and allowed a steam roller to pass over her recumbent body... Silly old fool!

thought Dorcas to herself. "Go on," urged Simon. "Go on, Dorkie." "Oh dear, wotever shalladoo," said Dorcas again, trying hard to simulate terror but not succeeding very well. "Be frightened," cried Simon eagerly. "Say, 'I'll have to get my gun.' Go on, Dorkie." Dorcas went through the usual formula. She should have been good at the game if practice makes perfect, for she and Simon played it every afternoon of their lives when they returned from their walk. Sometimes Simon was a lion or a tiger and sometimes he was a bear but "Dorkie's" role was always the same. Today Dorcas was less convincing than usual for her thoughts were not in her part. She was thinking how odd it was that children grew up so quickly and grown-up people remained much the same. It was only yesterday (or so it seemed to Dorcas) that she had carried Simon upstairs in her arms. Now he could run up the stairs much faster than she could. Tomorrow, or soon after, he would have grown too big to play bears-he would not need her anymore. The game of bears had taken a little longer than usual this afternoon, and Fay, who took no interest in it, began to climb up the stairs by herself. The steps were broad and shallow, for the Archway House had been built in spacious times, and Fay went up on all-fours like a very fat monkey. Her skirt stuck up in the air and showed her behind, which was clad in frilly drawers; her legs had delicious fat creases at the knee... Now they were all at the top and had crossed the landing and were clattering down the passage to the nursery.

"Hush!" cried Dorcas. "Not so much noise, Simon. The lady will think there's a regiment of soldiers in the house." "What lady?" asked Simon, stopping so suddenly that little Fay bumped into him. "The lady in the drawing room," Dorcas replied. "Who is she, Dorkie?" "Come along, do," said Dorcas. "We want our tea. We're late as it is...and I shouldn't wonder if the 'vacuees won't be coming up to play with you when they've done their lessons," added Dorcas guilefully. "Grice an' 'ilda'!" cried Simon, hopping about. "We'll play at going to the Zoo and..." "Simon, I've told you not to call them that!" "It's what they call themselves, Dorkie," declared Simon with an impish grin. "Grice an' 'ilda' 'ill from Edgewire." "Not now they don't. They've learnt better. Say it properly, Simon." "Grace and Hilda Hill from Hedgeware." "Vack-wees," added Fay in her precise little voice. "That's right," agreed Dorcas. "But who's the lady?" asked Simon who was of a persistent nature. "She's a vack-wee," suggested Fay. "She's a Mrs. Walker-that's who," replied Dorcas, who was busily engaged in laying the nursery tea. "She's sitting in the drawing room waiting for your mummy to come home." "Why?" "Oh dear, you are a curiosity! She's coming to give a lecture about the Red

Cross and she's going to stay the night." "Why is she going to?" "Because it's too far for her to go home-in the dark and all." "She should have a torch," said Fay. "And that's all I know about her," said Dorcas firmly. "So you needn't ask any more questions." "I want to see her, Dorkie," Simon declared. "Well, you can't then." "But Dorkie, I want to see her." "That's enough, Simon. You go and change your shoes like a good boy and then we'll 'ave our tea...we'll have our tea," she amended, sotto voce, as Simon left the room. It was not often that "Dorkie's" aitches came adrift-only sometimes when she was bothered or when such well-worn phrases as "we'll 'ave our tea" rolled off her tongue unawares-but sometimes was too often, thought Dorcas. She wasn't going to have Simon and Fay dropping their aitches because of her. Dorcas was elderly. She had been nurse to the children's mother, and, as a matter of fact, it did not seem very long ago. Then, when her small charge grew up she had stayed on as cook and general factotum. That stage in her career had lasted for years; it had been ended by her mistress's marriage when the faithful Dorcas had blossomed into a personal maid. Now she had reverted to her first job, and reverted with delight, for she adored children and was an excellent nurse. She possessed a calm and placid nature that was rarely ruffled-never ruffled by the children-and, although she was just a trifle too lenient with Simon, she had a certain amount of control over him and the children were moderately good and extremely well and happy under her care. Simon went into the night nursery and removed his shoes (he tugged them off quickly without undoing the laces) and put on his slippers and ran downstairs. He wanted to see the lady in the drawing room. He wanted to see her-that was all. Meanwhile the lady in the drawing room had been amusing herself quite happily; she had been provided with tea and left to enjoy it in peace. She did not mind having tea alone; in fact she welcomed the rest and solitude after her somewhat trying cross-country journey. The trains were hot and stuffy and crawled along stopping at every station-she had been obliged to change three times. At first Sarah Walker had been amused, for she was interested in people and had a sharp eye for anything funny or unusual, but after a bit her sense of humor had become blunted by exhaustion. If Sarah had known the journey was going to be so awful she would have hesitated before accepting the invitation to lecture at this meeting, but she had not known (from Silverstream to Wandlebury did not look far on the map). It was only when John came home and she asked him to look out her trains that she discovered what she had let herself in for. "If you had asked me, first, I could have told you," said John, looking at her with his grave smile. "I know," agreed Sarah, "but they wanted an answer and it looked quite near." "It's fifty miles as the crow flies but it will take you three hours. Need you go, Sally?" "I must, it's all arranged. I'm to stay the night with a Mrs. Abbott. I hope she'll be nice." "She won't be nice," said John with conviction. "They never are...but as long as she doesn't put you into a

damp bed-" "I'll sleep in my dressing gown, darling." "Did she ask you to stay?" asked John anxiously. "It was the committee," replied Sarah. "They just said they would find a room for me and then they rang up again and told me the address. Mrs. Abbott, The Archway House, Wandlebury." "I wish you wouldn't gad about the country like this," said John with a sigh. "But I'm quite strong now!" "Stronger than you were," amended John. "It's my war work," Sarah pointed out. "I don't enjoy tearing around the country giving Red Cross lectures-but I don't suppose soldiers enjoy fighting or munitions workers enjoy standing all day long, filing nuts and screws." John had made no further objections, but had looked up her trains for her and written them out clearly on the pad he used for his patients' prescriptions...and Sarah had followed the directions faithfully, changing from one train to another, and arriving safely-as she had known she would arrive-at Wandlebury Station. Now here she was in Mrs. Abbott's drawing room, eating Mrs. Abbott's buns and drinking Mrs. Abbott's tea out of a nice deep, well-shaped cup. It was pleasantly quiet and cool in the shady room and Sarah felt comfortably relaxed. She had a feeling that it would be very nice if Mrs. Abbott did not come home at all-she did not feel inclined to make polite conversation with a complete stranger. What would Mrs. Abbott be like? One ought to be able to tell what she was like from the room, thought Sarah, looking around with a sudden accession of interest. The room was exceedingly pleasant, large and well-proportioned, with tall windows that looked out on to a terrace and a rose garden. Mrs. Abbott would be a pleasant hostess if she was like her drawing room, if she had made it herself and had not inherited it or got it decorated by someone else. It was a dignified room, yet it was comfortable too, with good solid furniture and restful colorings...and what a lovely Adam mantelpiece! Sarah was so pleased with the mantelpiece that she rose from her chair and crossed the room to examine it and to run her fingers over the moldings, and, as she did so, her eyes fell on a miniature hanging on the wall... Sarah stared at the miniature. She had seen it before. "Barbara Buncle!" she exclaimed aloud. Yes, there was no doubt about it. She had seen that queer little picture of Barbara Buncle as a fat rosy child hanging upon the wall in the sitting room at Tanglewood Cottage! Dear Barbara, thought Sarah, and she looked at the little picture with affection-for she and Barbara had been friends, very great friends indeed until they had lost sight of each other. Barbara had left Tanglewood Cottage suddenly, she had vanished in the night and nobody in Silverstream had heard of her again. She had been obliged to go, of course, because she had written two very amusing books all about her neighbors and their little peculiarities, and her neighbors had not appreciated their portraits-quite the reverse. Sarah's lips curved into a smile as she thought of the tremendous upheaval those two books had caused in the village of Silverstream. But what did it mean? wondered Sarah. Why should this particular miniature be here, hanging on Mrs. Abbott's wall?

Sarah looked around the room again, with even more interest than before, for she wanted to see whether there was anything else in it that had belonged to Barbara. The furniture was not from Tanglewood Cottage-definitely not-it was much too large; but there were one or two odds and ends that seemed familiar to Sarah...a couple of china vases, a bronze cowbell, a sandalwood box... The door opened and Simon walked in. He shut the door firmly and then turned and looked at the lady. He had wanted to see her and he was seeing her now. She was worth seeing, Simon thought: not young, but slim and pretty with big gray smiling eyes. He looked at her and she looked at him. Then she laughed. "Are you the Golden Boy?" she inquired. "I'm Simon Abbott," he replied solemnly. "A very good name," she remarked. She was calculating rapidly as she spoke...how many years was it since Barbara had fled from the fury of Silverstream? "I count on my fingers, too," Simon told her. "Daddy says you shouldn't, but it's the easiest way." "Much the easiest," agreed Sarah. "I always do. How old are you, Simon?" "Four years older than the war," replied Simon promptly. "I can remember when there wasn't any war at all. I can even remember bananas-and cream." "They were good, weren't they," said Sarah reminiscently. "Do you know Mummy?" asked Simon, who was anxious to obtain as much information as possible before some tiresome person interrupted this pleasant tÃ¢fÃte-Ã¢fÃte. "I think so," said Sarah. "I wondered," he admitted. "I mean I wondered if you were a friend of Mummy's or if you were just a Red Cross person." "I'm both," replied Sarah, for she was practically certain that she was. "I'm a Red Cross person and I used to know Mummy before she was married." "You don't look old." "Age is relative," said Sarah gravely. "Which really means that, although you might think me old, a person of ninety would think me quite young." "Compared to them," agreed Simon, nodding to show that he understood. "Exactly." "Have you got any children?" "Two. They're twins, which is rather fun." Simon digested this. He said, "I'd rather just be me." "Some people feel like that," allowed Sarah. "Where do you live?" Simon wanted to know. "At Silverstream." "Is it far from here?" "Not far as the crow flies," replied Sarah with a sigh. Simon's questionnaire continued, "What are you?-besides being a Mummy, I mean." "A doctor's wife," replied Sarah without a moment's hesitation. "Do you help him?" Simon asked. "I try to," she declared, smiling to herself. "I run his house and answer his telephone and amuse him when he has time to be amused. Yes, Simon, I think I'm a fairly useful wife." Simon nodded. Then he said, "Who is the Golden Boy? You thought I was him, didn't you?" "I thought you might be," she replied. "You see I was thinking about the Golden Boy and then the door opened and you came in." "Is it a story?" "Yes." "An interesting story?" "Very interesting. Even people who didn't like the story were deeply interested in it." Sarah had resumed her seat at the table and was pouring out another cup of tea. She was enjoying her chat with Simon; his questions did not worry her at all for she was used to her

own children. They were a good deal older than Simon now, but they still asked questions-children could not learn unless you answered them sensibly, or so Sarah thought. Simon had perched himself on the end of the sofa with one leg tucked beneath him; he looked more than ever like Sarah's conception of the Golden Boy. All gold, he was. His hair and skin were different tones of gold, and his eyes were flecked with the same precious color. His face had a slightly impish look and his small flat ears were just a trifle pointed. How odd that Barbara should have produced a real live Golden Boy! "Tell me about it," said Simon eagerly. "Tell me the story." "It's a grown-up story," said Sarah after a pause. This was true, of course, but not entirely true, for, as a matter of fact, it was a story her own children had always adored and Sarah had told it so often in simple language that she could have told it to Simon very easily. It was the story of how the Golden Boy came dancing into Silverstream, playing on his pipe and stirring up trouble, bringing life and movement into the sleepy place...so that even the buns on the baker's counter began to hop about. Of course Simon would like it-Sarah had no doubt of that-but she felt she had no right to tell Simon Abbott this particular story. Only one person had that right. "I think it's just a little too grown-up," said Sarah firmly. "I'll tell you about Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp."

I love the Barbara Buncle books and this one is a lovely tying up of relationships from the other two books. It is also about coping with war and having hope amidst outside chaos. Life must go on regardless of the turmoil. Some characters are also in *The Four Graces* which adds more to the story of Archie Chevis-Cobbe and Jerry Abbott. These books are refreshing to my soul after so many books today that degrade the human spirit.

I have to say at the start that I loved Miss Buncle books one and two. Book number three does not live up to the first two. There is something very abrupt about it. Stories are developed and left dangling. Even some chapters are ended unsatisfactorily. The ending which has brought one of the story lines to a happy conclusion seemed rushed and left the reader very unsatisfied. In addition, Miss Buncle who is now the First Mrs Abbot is shoved into the background of her very own book. I am almost afraid to read *The Four Graces*. Then again perhaps it is the other half of the *Two Mrs Abbotts*.

The last of the three Miss Buncle books (*Miss Buncle's Book*, *Miss Buncle Married*), the "*Two Mrs Abbotts*" is a relaxing quick read. Not only are the characters charmingly realistic (and people you would like to meet) the book is a small window in to British home life during the second world war.

Rationing, displaced families, and soldier's barracks will be of equal interest to the modern reader as the story itself. There is even a little bit of excitement with a spy to liven up the inhabitant's daily life. I recommend this as a good, quick, relaxing read.

With the many people moving to the area from London because of the bombing we meet new characters in about every chapter. We also become better acquainted with people we know from previous books. Keeps a person very interested as you never know what will happen next. A very enjoyable book"

D E Stevenson is one of my favorite authors. I first started reading her books when I discovered her at our local library. It was not long before I decided that I wanted to start collecting her books for my own, so I started haunting thrift stores and used book shops. At that time, it was very expensive to buy her books new, even if you could find them. When I first got my Kindle, hers was the name I looked up first, but unfortunately, none of her books were available. "Miss Buncle" and "The Two Mrs. Abbots" were two I had never been able to find in any stores, so I was so thrilled when they were two of the first ones offered for Kindle. I am now reading "The Two Mrs. Abbots", and am loving it. I have all 4 of the books available on Kindle at this time, and have put the next one coming out on my wish list. As I buy new ones for my Kindle, ones that I already had in hard back or paper back, I pass on to someone else, wanting to share one of my favorite authors.

A charming end to a lovely trilogy. Just because something was written 70 years ago doesn't mean it's boring and predictable. The characters are such great representations of their time. It's wonderful that older out-of-print novels are being re-published (if that's a word).

This book continues the story of Miss Buncle and Miss Buncle Married. Miss Buncle, or Mrs. Abbot, herself sort of takes a back seat in this book, but characters introduced in the previous two book are expanded and the story carries the reader into their lives in greater depth. I loved finding out more about the romantic book author introduced in other books by D.E. Stevenson as well as others in the Miss Buncle series.

Good read, good book if you are following Miss Buncle who then became Mrs. Abbott. Sometimes a little slow but you still want to finish the book to see how it ends. It doesn't end, you have to get the next book. Like I said if you start the first one which was great, you will have to continue with the

rest.

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